



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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REPORT CHRONICLES PROGRESS IN ENDANGERED SPECIES RECOVERY

Nearly 40 percent of plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act are now stable or improving, according to a report to Congress prepared by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Of 711 U.S. listed species for the reporting period ending September 28, 1992, 10 percent were found to be improving and 28 percent were considered stable as a direct result of recovery efforts.

"These statistics tell us we are making significant progress toward restoring endangered and threatened species," said Service Director Mollie Beattie. "All 711 species were declining when listed, and it is often difficult to identify the causes of a species' decline and stop its downward trend. A success rate of nearly 40 percent in only 20 years is remarkable."

The report, "Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery Program -- Report to Congress," evaluates the recovery progress of all U.S. listed species and notes whether a species' status is improving, stable, declining, unknown, or extinct. This is the second such report. The first, covering species listed through October 1990, found about 41 percent of listed species stable or improving.

"The difference between the 1990 report and this one can be attributed to the fact that we have added a large number of species to the list in the last two years, and many of these still require considerable work to determine their status," said Beattie. The Fish and Wildlife Service listed 131 species between October 1990 and September 1992.

Among the recovery achievements documented in the report are the Aleutian Canada goose, which has rebounded from a low of 300

(more)

birds in 1967 to an estimated 7,900 during the winter of 1991/92. The Aleutian Canada goose was reclassified from endangered to threatened in 1990.

New populations of the California condor and the black-footed ferret, once extinct in the wild, have been reintroduced. The bald eagle and Arctic and American peregrine falcons have also responded to recovery efforts, and the Service has proposed removing the Arctic peregrine from the threatened list. The report lists 25 species for which the Service is considering proposals to remove from the list or reclassify from endangered to threatened.

The 1992 recovery report found the percentage of species considered declining dropped from 38 percent to 33 percent, but those whose status is unknown climbed to 27 percent from 19 percent. Budgetary and staffing constraints within the Service were identified as reasons for the undetermined status. As in 1990, 2 percent of listed species were believed to be extinct, and it is believed that most reached that status before being listed. However, Service biologists are reluctant to delist these species if there is a chance they could still be found. Recently, a species of butterfly -- the Palos Verde blue -- thought to be extinct, was rediscovered in California.

Of the 711 U.S. species included in the report, 410 or 58 percent had approved recovery plans. Draft plans had been developed for an additional 58 species. Of those remaining, 170 species had been listed for less than 3 years.

Under a new policy recently announced by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, recovery plans will be drafted within 18 months of a species' listing and completed within another year. While these plans are being developed, recovery activities are often already underway, conducted by the Service and other agencies.

Recovery plans function as working guidelines which outline specific tasks required for species recovery. While they carry no legal authority, recovery plans provide a framework for recovery used by Federal, state, county, and private agencies. Many plans are developed by the Service in coordination with these other agencies and organizations.

Copies of the report may be ordered for \$17 by calling the Superintendent of Documents at 202-783-3238 using Mastercard or VISA, or by writing Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402-9325; stock number 024-01000703-6.

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